

My personal statement opposing relaxation of broadcast ownership rules.

The radio spectrum is a limited resource which has long been held to be a public good which is owned by the American public. Yet, what is known of the proposed rules has all the appearance and substance of a handout to a limited number of individuals and corporations at the expense, and over the opposition of, the public at large.

FCC Chairman, Michael Powell, has put forward a number of arguments for why the ownership rules need to be relaxed. The main argument being that the networks which supply the majority of prime time television over the air are in peril of not continuing as viable businesses, and that more quality programming can be made available if the larger companies could own more of the individually profitable stations.

These arguments appear to have more than refuted by a number of commenters that have pointed out that the same companies that own the networks themselves own a large percentage of the more profitable cable and satellite systems. In any case, I do not believe that it is in the interest of U.S. citizens to enact rules to allow what amounts to corporate welfare. Indeed, these rules seem to be designed to force the next 'Brittany Spears' down as many media channels as possible upon the American public, thereby creating strings of blockbuster profits for the companies.

I bemoan the loss of local voice that has arisen due to corporate takeovers of small town newspapers and radio spectrum. It is truly an eerie and disorientating experience to fly into another town and find exactly the same radio formats, playlists, promos, etc. This adds to the 'vanillization' of America and results in a tremendous loss of diversity in culture and thought. It is likely to lead, in my opinion, to a growing sense of alienation and disassociation between people and the world at large.

It is truly incredible to me, in one sense, to believe that the 'costs' have risen so dramatically to produce shows. The technology to record and edit shows appears to have improved dramatically, and have likely been dramatically reduced in cost in concert with decreasing computer and electronic costs. In other words, it no longer takes a large corporate staff to perform many of the basic work of getting quality images on the air. See, for example, how Robert Rodriguez, the producer of the Spy Kids movies, has challenged the concept that quality media requires big bucks. One of the compelling reasons for following baseball in this day and age is how the Oakland A's can use their cunning to compete effectively with the likes of the New York Yankees yet their total salaries face such a wide disparity.

One possible conclusion of the 'imminent peril' faced by the corporations is that the 'Old Network' business model is outdated, obsolete, and should justifiably be bankrupted. The ownership of the airwaves would remain with the public. Perhaps it is time that we reassign these rights to a new generation of companies that are willing to produce and air a more diverse and culturally distinct

set of shows. It may be that some of these shows would be ones that no one would willingly watch. However, it is also likely that new concepts and views would come forth that would have value and appeal to at least some segment of the population (instead of just the 18-24 demographic). We may also be treated to the development of new crop of talented individuals that would otherwise have never been given an opportunity to develop.

In closing, I would like to thank Chairman Powell for being, and providing a public face to Exhibit A, "Government Knows What's Best for You".

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